

Message Text

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64

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 AID-05 EB-07

CIEP-02 TRSE-00 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01 COME-00 OPIC-06

XMB-04 AGR-10 /105 W

----- 016955

R 212205Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0132

INFO DIA WASHDC

USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 2129

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJ: BENNATON AND LOPEZ PROCLAIM THEIR INNOCENCE

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 2090

1. THE NEWSPAPER DEBATE CONCERNING WHAT CRIMES BENNATON AND UB MAY HAVE COMMITTED HAS DEMINISHED. NEWSPAPER REPORTS INDICATE THAT BENNATON MAY MAKE HIS FIRST APPEARANCE BEFORE THE FIRST CRIMINAL COURT THIS WEEK. TIEMPO OF MAY 21 QUOTES INVESTIGATING COMMISSION COORDINATOR REINA AS SAYING THAT ALL THE COMMISSION'S DOCUMENTS WILL BE GIVEN TO THE "PROCURADOR"(ATTORNEY GENERAL) MAY 21 FOR USE IN THE CRIMINAL CASE AGAINST BENNATON.

2. A GROUP OF FECESITLIH (TEGUCIGALPA BASED LABOR UNCLASSIFIED

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FEDERATION) UNIONISTS LED BY FEDERATION PRESIDENT

GUSTAVO ZELAYA MADE A COURTESY CALL ON FORMER CHIEF OF STATE LOPEZ AT HIS HOME MAY 20. IN THE INTERVIEW, COVERED BY TIEMPO OF MAY 21, LOPEZ SAID THAT HE IS INNOCENT IN THE UB BRIBERY SCANDAL AND THAT HE BELIEVED BENNATON TO BE ALSO. HE SAID THAT THE UB RAILROAD AND DOCK CONCESSIONS WERE IN FACT EXPIRED AND THAT THE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY HURRICANE FIFI INTERRUPTED NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE COMPANY. LOPEZ ALSO SAID THAT BENNATON WAS BEING DENIED DUE PROCESS BY BEING RESTRICTED TO HIS HOME. LOPEZ REPORTEDLY SAID THAT HE HAS NO DESIRE TO RETURN TO POWER. THE UNIONISTS TOLD REPORTERS THAT THE VISIT WAS MADE IN RECOGNITION THAT MANY OF LABOR'S ADVANCEMENTS MADE IN RECENT YEARS WERE DUE TO GENERAL LOPEZ.

3. RADIO HRN AIRED A TAPED STATEMENT BY BENNATON ON MAY 20 IN WHICH THE FORMER MINISTER CLAIMED HE IS BEING HELD VIRTUALLY INCOMMUNICADO IN HIS HOME. HE SAID THAT HIS PHONES HAVE BEEN CUT OFF AND THAT HE HAS BEEN TOLD THAT HE AND HIS FAMILY WILL BE ARRESTED IF THEY TRY TO LEAVE THE HOUSE. BENNATON STATED THAT THESE ACTIONS CONSTITUTE A VIOLATION OF HIS CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS. BENNATON REITERATED HIS EARLIER CLAIMS OF INNOCENCE AND ONCE AGAIN SAID THAT HE IS THE VICTIM OF A PLOT BY THE MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES. HE SAID THAT ALL HE WANTED WAS A CHANCE TO DEFEND HIMSELF IN A FAIR TRIAL BUT, CONSIDERING THE MEASURES SO FAR TAKEN, HE DOUBTS THAT A FAIR TRIAL IS POSSIBLE.

4. IN TIEMPO OF MAY 21, PROCURADOR GENERAL (ATTORNEY GENERAL) SERAPIO HERNANDEZ COMMENTED ON THE CURRENT DEBATE ABOUT WHETHER THE PROHIBITION AGAINST DEPARTURE FROM THE COUNTRY IMPOSED UPON LOPEZ, BENNATON AND UB'S LOCAL MANAGER LACOMBE IS LEGAL. HERNANDEZ SAID THAT IT WAS A SHAME THAT SOME VIEW THE MOVE AS ILLEGAL AND ARBITRARY. HOWEVER, EVEN IF IT IS ARBITRARY, IT MUST REMAIN IN FORCE BECAUSE IT WOULD BE "UNPARDONABLE" IF ANY OF THE GUILTY ESCAPED. SANCHEZ

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